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WHEN BEES COLLIDE

WASHINGTON—The genes of Africanized honeybees are mixing with those of European-descended honeybees in North and South America, according to research recently published in *Nature* magazine by a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist.

“This research holds out the hope that interbreeding will mitigate the undesirable traits of the Africanized honeybee (AHB) as it spreads into the United States,” said Steve Sheppard, an entomologist with USDA’s Agricultural Research Service. These traits include being easier to provoke to sting and more difficult to manage for pollinating crops.

Scientists have disagreed on how much mixing of genes has been taking place as AHBs spread into new areas. Some researchers believe that when the two types of honeybees interbreed, AHBs genetically “take over” the area.

“But there is no question that we found hybrid honeybees—bees with genes of both African and European origin,” he said. “Africanized queens had mated with European drones and visa versa, proving that genetic mixing is taking place, not just a replacement of one group by the other.”

AHBs became a problem when honeybees were imported from Africa to Brazil to cross with bees already present in South America to breed a strain better suited to the tropics. Honeybees are not native to the New World and were brought here by colonists. In 1957, the African honeybees were inadvertently released into the wild. Their descendants are today called Africanized honeybees.

Since 1957, AHBs have been spreading north and south from Brazil. The first AHB swarm was found in the U.S. from this expanding range in October 1990 near Hidalgo, Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley.

Sheppard, who is with the ARS Bee Research Laboratory in Beltsville, Md., recently made two trips to South America to the transition region between the tropic and temperate zones where Africanized and European honeybee territories overlap.

“If interbreeding is going on, this is the area where there should be the greatest amount of mixing, with honeybees all along the genetic range from European-derived to African-derived,” Sheppard said.

Using samples taken from the transition region, he compared genetic markers from two sources: mitochondrial DNA, which is inherited only from the queen, and nuclear DNA, which comes from both parents and determines the bee’s anatomy and physiology.

The samples showed interbreeding and gene flow occurred frequently enough between the types of bees that both Africanized and European mitochondrial DNA are now associated with the whole range of nuclear gene types, according to Sheppard.

Sheppard also found bees in the transition zone that ran the gamut of behavior from gentle to very aggressive. And behavior did not necessarily follow mitochondrial DNA or morphology.

“We found bees with Africanized morphology and mitochondrial DNA that seemed as gentle as typical European honeybees. We found others with European morphology and mitochondrial DNA that were very aggressive,” Sheppard said.

ARS scientists expect it may be possible to mitigate AHBs’ undesirable traits. One way would be to arrange for more European genes in the mix by flooding a queen’s breeding area with European type drones.

One factor that may have contributed to the dominance AHBs appear to have had in South and Central America is the small resident population of European-descended honeybees. “AHBs have been moving into a relatively unoccupied ecological niche, one for which they are climatically well-adapted, unlike the European-derived honeybee,” Sheppard said.

“But most of the United States has a large, well-adapted feral honeybee population,” he added. “This may make quite a difference in the outcome of interbreeding between the two types of bees in this country.”

Interbreeding or not, Sheppard pointed out that AHBs are not the evil villains that popular portrayal have made them out to be.

Although AHBs are more overtly defensive than domestic honeybees, they generally react only when their nests are threatened. They will sting in greater numbers and with less provocation, but their venom is no more poisonous than that of the domestic honeybee.

U.S. agriculture and beekeeping industries have two primary concerns about the intrusion of the AHB into this country. AHBs may be harder to manage as pollinators of crops and may not be as efficient when it comes to U.S. honey production.

Honeybees ensure the pollination of crops worth \$5 to \$10 billion a year. They also produce about \$150 million worth of honey a year.

“Problems with honeybees can mean problems for agriculture, unless we learn to deal with AHBs,” Sheppard said. “Understanding how AHBs interact and interbreed with other honeybees in Argentina may give us a handle on the problem and possible solutions in the United States”

Kim Kaplan (301) 344-3932

Issued: Feb. 28. 1991

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USDA ANNOUNCES 1991 BURLEY TOBACCO NO-NET-COST ASSESSMENT

WASHINGTON, Feb. 28—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced a no-net-cost assessment of .416 cents per pound for the 1991 crop of burley tobacco.

The no-net-cost assessment, plus the new 1991 marketing assessment, means that a total of 2 cents per pound will be collected on each pound of burley tobacco marketed from the 1991 crop. The assessments will be shared equally between producers and purchasers with each paying 1 cent per pound on the 1991 crop.

Funds in the no-net-cost tobacco account ensure the price support program for burley tobacco will be operated at no net cost to taxpayers, as required by the No-Net-Cost Tobacco Program Act of 1982.

The marketing assessment of 1.584 cents per pound, announced on Jan. 30, 1991, is required by the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 and is to be shared equally between producers and purchasers.

USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation consulted with both the Burley Tobacco Growers Cooperative Association and the Burley Stabilization Corporation, the producer-owned associations through which price support is made available for burley tobacco, before reaching a final determination.

Bruce Merkle (202) 447-8206

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USDA ANNOUNCES 1991 FLUE-CURED TOBACCO NO-NET-COST ASSESSMENT

WASHINGTON, Feb. 28—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced a no-net-cost assessment of .472 cents per pound for the 1991 crop of flue-cured tobacco.

The no-net-cost assessment, plus the new 1991 marketing assessment, means that a total of 2 cents per pound will be collected on each pound of flue-cured tobacco marketed from the 1991 crop. The assessments will be shared equally between producers and purchasers with each paying 1 cent per pound on the 1991 crop.

Funds in the no-net-cost tobacco account ensure the price support program for flue-cured tobacco will be operated at no net cost to taxpayers, as required by the No-Net-Cost Tobacco Program Act of 1982.

The marketing assessment of 1.528 cents per pound, announced on Dec. 14, 1990, is required by the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 and is to be shared equally between producers and purchasers.

USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation consulted with the Flue-Cured Tobacco Cooperative Stabilization Corporation, the producer-owned association through which price support is made available for flue-cured tobacco, before reaching a final determination.

Bruce Merkle (202) 447-8206

#

USDA TARGETS NEW MARKETS FOR EXPORT OF DAIRY PRODUCTS

WASHINGTON, March 1—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman today announced new allocations under the Dairy Export Incentive Program to help exporters of U.S. milk powder and butterfat compete on the world market.

Like the Export Enhancement Program, export sales will be facilitated through the payment of bonuses in the form of commodities from the inventory of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation. Sales of milk powder and butterfat will be made through normal commercial channels at competitive world prices.

Bonuses under the program are available to 70 countries totaling 139,800 metric tons of milk powder and to 59 countries totaling 40,800 metric tons of butterfat, allocated as shown in the tables below.

These allocations will be valid until Dec. 31, as provided for in the invitation for offers. Details of the program, including an invitation for offers, will be issued in the near future.

The DEIP was created by the Food Security Act of 1985 and extended by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990.

For more information call Paul Cummins, (202) 382-9240, or L.T. McElvain, (202) 447-6225. For a tape-recorded message announcing issuance of invitations under DEIP call the CCC Operations Hotline, (202) 447-2042.

Quantities of U.S. Milk Powder Eligible for Shipment
with Bonuses to Eligible Countries
Under the DEIP

Country/ Region	Allocation (MT)	Country	Allocation (MT)
Algeria	20,000	Bangladesh	3,000
Bolivia	1,000	Chile	2,000
China	4,000	Colombia	1,000
Cyprus	250	Djibouti	1,000
Ecuador	500	Egypt	5,000
French Guiana	250	Greenland	100
Guadeloupe	1,000	Guyana	250
Israel	2,000	Malta	100
Morocco	2,000	Netherlands Antilles	500
New Caledonia	250	Pakistan	3,000
Saudi Arabia	15,000	Seychelles	100
Surname	500	USSR	20,000
Tunisia	3,000	Turkey	1,500
Venezuela	15,000		

CENTRAL AND
WEST AFRICA 20,000

(Angola, Benin, Burkina, Cameroon, Cape Verde Islands, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Zaire)

CENTRAL
AMERICA 7,500

(Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama)

PERSIAN GULF 5,000

(Bahrain, Oman, Qatar)

CARIBBEAN 5,000

(Bahamas, Bermuda, Dominica, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Martinique, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago)

Quantities of U.S. Butterfat Eligible for Shipment
with Bonuses to Eligible Countries
Under the DEIP

Country/ Region	Allocation (MT)	Country	Allocation (MT)
Algeria	5,000	Bangladesh	100
Bolivia	100	China	1,000
Colombia	100	Cyprus	200
Djibouti	100	Egypt	5,000
Faroe Islands	100	French Guiana	100
Greenland	100	Guyana	100
Israel	200	Morocco	2,000
Netherlands Antilles	100	New Caledonia	100
Pakistan	1,000	Peru	1,000

Saudi Arabia	5,000	Suriname	100
Tunisia	1,000	Turkey	500
USSR	5,000	Venezuela	300

CENTRAL AND
WEST AFRICA 5,000

(Angola, Benin, Burkina, Cameroon, Cape Verde Islands, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal,Sierra Leone, Togo, Zaire)

CENTRAL
AMERICA 1,000

(Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua)

PERSIAN GULF 5,000

(Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates)

CARIBBEAN 1,500

(Bahamas, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe, Martinique, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago)

Sally Klusaritz (202) 447-3448

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CCC INTEREST RATE FOR MARCH LOWERED TO 6-3/8 PERCENT

WASHINGTON, March 1—Commodity loans disbursed in March by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation will carry a 6-3/8 percent interest rate, according to Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of the CCC.

The 6-3/8 percent interest rate is down from February's 6-3/4 percent and reflects the interest rate charged CCC by the U.S. Treasury in March.

Robert Feist (202) 447-6789

#

SEX LURE WITH A TWIST, OKAYED BY EPA, COULD CUT PESTICIDE USE ON APPLES

WASHINGTON, March 1—Male codling moths searching for sex in the apple orchard could be increasingly frustrated. Baffled by a fake version of the female's sex scent all over the orchard, the males fail to locate a real female, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist.

No mating means no moth eggs and no worms in apples. This could become a more common scenario, said James L. Krysan of USDA's Agricultural Research Service, because the agency plans larger tests of a commercial, newly federally approved "sex scent dispenser" for the moths.

On Feb. 27, the Environmental Protection Agency approved commercial use of twist ties against codling moths. The phony sex scent, as well as the ties, are commercially made; ARS and other researchers helped identify the natural sex scent so it could be synthesized.

EPA's approval, Krysan noted, permits needed, larger-scale cooperative tests with apple growers. The Yakima ARS team hopes to begin tests this summer in orchards in the Yakima Valley, one of the state's main apple producing areas.

Krysan said EPA earlier approved similar twist ties for use against other other fruit pests, but this is the first one for use on a pest of apples.

In one-acre test orchards, Krysan's research team in Yakima, Wash., found 85 percent fewer codling worms with the dispensers—seven-inch-long plastic twist ties that emit a synthetic version of the female's sex scent. The twist ties are wrapped around the twigs of apple trees.

“If the strategy passes larger tests, it could reduce and possibly eliminate the need for pesticides to control codling moths,” said Krysan, who leads the ARS Fruit and Vegetable Insect Research Unit in Yakima.

Currently, growers fend off the moths with insecticides such as azinphosmethyl. Concern over pesticide residues—on fruit and in the environment—have spurred consumer and producer interest in alternatives. In addition, Krysan noted, codling moths in some Washington and California orchards are becoming resistant to azinphosmethyl.

“The moth's worm offspring,” Krysan said, “are the number one apple pest in the U.S. If an apple has a worm hole, chances are a codling moth larvae made it.”

Pinkish-white larvae of the moth burrow into the codling (which means “small, immature apple”) when the fruit is about golf-ball size. The larvae feed on the apple's seed and core, then tunnel out after they fatten up. The larvae also attack pears and walnuts.

Normally, female moths entice prospective mates by emitting their sex scent, or pheromone, which males “smell” with their antennae. While the females send out their scents for just a few minutes, the twist ties release pheromone slowly over a period of three months. Detectable only to the moth, it engulfs the orchard and makes finding a mate nearly impossible, said Krysan.

In one-acre plots, tests of mating disruption by Yakima entomologist J.F. Howell gave “85 to 90 percent control” of codling moths, Krysan noted. A control level of 90 percent, he added, translated to larval damage in fewer than one percent of the apples. “That's very close to what most commercial growers can achieve using pesticides.”

The Yakima research team has studied the twist ties on one-acre plots for the the past five years. Krysan emphasized that more research is needed to see how the ties perform under a wide variety of conditions. For instance, the size of the trees and the number of moths present in an orchard could affect the results, he said.

“The strategy requires careful planning,” Krysan explained. “You can't just hang the ties on a tree and expect that they'll work.”

Biocontrol Ltd., in Davis, Calif., provided the ties for the Yakima tests. Philipp Kirsch, the firm's general manager, said each tie contains about six drops of pheromone, and two of the three chemicals that make up the pheromone occur naturally in apples in trace amounts. In high concentrations, he said, the pheromone smells faintly of overripe bananas.

Kirsch said the ties will be marketed under the name Isomate-C, and their cost would be comparable to the cost of using pesticides against the moths.

The twist ties were first made in the early 1980s by Biocontrol Ltd.'s supplier, Shin-Etsu Chemical Co. of Tokyo. While the field tests were in progress, David R. Brown and Leslie G. McDonough of the ARS research team studied the breakdown of the pheromone in the dispensers each season. That information helped Biocontrol optimize the ratio and amounts of pheromone in the twist ties, Kirsch said.

Washington state produces about half the nation's fresh apples. The state's growers spend approximately \$12 million each year controlling codling moths. Last year's apple crop, including both fresh and processed apples, was valued at over \$1 billion, nationwide.

Julie Corliss (415) 559-6069

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USDA ISSUES PROPOSED RULES AFFECTING PAYMENT LIMITATIONS

WASHINGTON, March 1—Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation, today asked for public comment on proposed amendments to the statutory payment limitation provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, as required by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990.

The proposed rules are:

—A new \$75,000 per person limitation affects deficiency payments, loan deficiency payments and marketing loan gains for the upland cotton, wheat, feedgrain and oilseed programs.

—Payments made under the wool or mohair programs are limited to \$200,000 per person for each program.

—Under the honey program, loan deficiency payments and gains from honey marketing loans are limited to \$200,000 per person. There is a

\$200,000 limitation on the value of honey which may be forfeited to CCC under the honey price support program. Honey-loan deficiency payments, marketing loan gains from honey-marketing loans and the value of honey forfeited to CCC by an entity, such as a trust, corporation or estate, shall be attributed to the entity and to each member of the entity in proportion to the member's shares.

—A new inheritance provision affects the Conservation Reserve Program. It would allow producers who inherit land to assume a CRP contract and receive annual payments without regard to the dollar amount of contracts executed by the inheritor before inheritance.

—For trusts to be eligible for payments under the commodity programs, the trust must provide an identification number, such as a tax identification number, that differs from the number of the person who established the trust (the grantor).

—For payment limitation purposes, for a trust to be considered an irrevocable trust, the trust must not allow for modification by the grantor or allow the grantor to have any future interest in the trust's assets. The trust must not allow for transfer of the trust to the beneficiary in less than 20 years, unless the beneficiary or the grantor dies or the trust is to terminate when the beneficiary reaches majority or a greater age.

—Spouses may each be considered separate persons and receive commodity program payments in the same amounts available to two unmarried individuals. In order to be considered separate persons each spouse must otherwise be eligible to receive payments as a separate "person" and neither spouse may have an interest in any other entity which receives commodity program payments.

Under the proposed rule, a number of programs, such as the Agricultural Conservation Program and the Forestry Incentive Program, will use the same definition of a "person" as is used in commodity programs. This will permit the uniform application of "person" rules to all programs which are administered by ASCS.

The 1990 law also requires that an Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service state office make "persons" and "active engagement in farming," determinations, when six or more persons may receive payment on the same farm.

Send comments to: Director, Cotton, Grain and Rice Price Support Division, ASCS, USDA, P.O. Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013.

John C. Ryan (202) 447-8207

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USDA ANNOUNCES 1991 ACREAGE ALLOTMENTS, PRICE SUPPORT FOR 6 KINDS OF TOBACCO

WASHINGTON, March 1—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced acreage allotments and price support levels for six kinds of tobacco for the 1991 marketing year. USDA also announced marketing quotas for the next three marketing years for fire-cured (types 21-23) tobacco and for dark aircured (types 35-36) tobacco. The 1991 allotments and support levels are included in the following table for comparison:

Kind of Tobacco	National Allotment		Support Level		Marketing Assessment		
	(Acres)		(\$ per lb.)		Growers Buyers		Total
	1990	1991	1990	1991	(cents per lb.)		
Virginia fire-cured (type 21)	4,315	3,900	1.262	1.332	.666	.666	1.332
Kentucky-Tennessee fire-cured (types 22-23)	15,071	15,037	1.297	1.367	.6835	.6835	1.367
Dark air-cured (types 35-36)	4,361	5,142	1.107	1.169	.5845	.5845	1.169
Virginia sun-cured (type 37)	285	213	1.115	1.177	.5885	.5885	1.177
Cigar filler and binder (types 42-44 and 53-55)	11,953	11,505	0.962	1.014	.507	.507	1.014
Cigar filler (type 46)	0		0		.4065	.4065	.813

The price support levels for 1991 range between 4.5 and 5.5 percent higher than the 1990-crop levels. The cooperative marketing associations, through which price support is made available to eligible producers, are authorized to request a reduction in the price support level to improve the marketability of the tobacco.

The Commodity Credit Corporation will establish individual grade loan rates before the marketing season begins.

The marketing assessment under the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1990 will be .5 percent of the support level on both growers and buyers for a total of 1 percent per pound for the 1991 crops of tobacco.

Except for farms on which producers in recent years have planted or received planted credit of less than 75 percent of the farm's acreage allotment, Virginia fire-cured, Kentucky-Tennessee fire-cured, sun-cured and cigar filler and binder allotments remain unchanged from 1990; dark

air-cured allotments will increase by 20 percent from 1990. Puerto Rican cigar filler (type 46) allotments will remain at zero due to the oversupply of this tobacco.

USDA will hold separate referenda March 25-28. Producers of firecured (types 21-23) and producers of dark air-cured (types 35-36) will vote to determine if quotas are approved for the marketing years 1991, 1992 and 1993.

If more than one-third of the fire-cured or dark air-cured tobacco producers who vote oppose quotas, marketing quotas of that kind of tobacco will not be in effect for the 1991 marketing year.

Quotas were in effect for the 1988-90 crops of fire-cured and dark air-cured tobaccos. Quotas were approved by majorities of 90.4 percent for fire-cured and 91.7 percent for dark air-cured.

Notices of the 1991 allotments for individual farms will be mailed to producers by county Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation (CCC) Committees.

The committees will also mail referendum ballots to all known eligible producers. Producers who do not receive a ballot may obtain one from their county ASCS office.

Robert Feist (202) 447-6789

#

USDA RAISES PACA LICENSE FEE

WASHINGTON, March 1—The U.S. Department of Agriculture will increase the basic, annual license fee required for fruit and vegetable traders to operate in the produce industry under provisions of the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA) effective today.

The new fee schedule requires a firm licensed under PACA to pay an annual fee of \$400 plus \$200 for each branch facility it operates in excess of nine, to a maximum of \$4,000. The current fee is \$300 plus \$150 for each branch facility in excess of nine, to a \$3,000 maximum.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said "PACA's workload has increased since enactment of the trust provisions and the license fee increase will ensure that services to the produce industry are maintained since PACA is funded by license fees."

PACA establishes a code of good business conduct for the produce industry and requires all traders in fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables to be licensed by USDA.

Notice of the fee increase will be published as a final rule in the today's Federal Register. Copies and additional information may also be obtained from the PACA Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, Room 2095-S, P. O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456, telephone 475-3244.

Carolyn Coutts (202) 447-8998

#

USDA TO TAKE OVER MARYLAND INSPECTION PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, March 1—Effective March 31, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will assume responsibility for the meat and poultry inspection program of the state of Maryland, a USDA official announced today.

“The governor of Maryland has notified USDA that the state will not continue funding its meat and poultry inspection program after March 30,” said Dr. Lester M. Crawford, administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service. If for any reason a state cannot or does not choose to maintain its inspection program, the state must turn it over to the federal government, he said.

Approximately 50 meat and poultry plants in Maryland must apply for federal inspection by March 30 in order to continue operating. FSIS will review about 27 custom-exempt facilities that prepare meat or poultry for use solely by an individual owner and not for resale to determine if they must come under federal inspection. Some state inspection personnel may be offered federal positions in plants approved for federal inspection.

Federally inspected plants may sell meat and poultry products across state lines. Under state inspection, meat and poultry products can be sold only within that state. In addition, state inspection programs must be at least equal to the federal program.

Maryland is the 23rd state to give up its meat and poultry inspection program. The last state to turn over both meat and poultry inspection to the federal government was Rhode Island in 1981.

The final rule on the designation of Maryland's meat and poultry inspection program will be published in the March 4 Federal Register.

The Food Safety and Inspection Service and its 9,000 employees are dedicated to ensuring meat and poultry products are safe, wholesome and accurately labeled.

Jim Greene (202) 382-0314

#

USDA ANNOUNCES CHANGES IN HIGHLY ERODIBLE AND WETLAND CONSERVATION PROVISIONS

WASHINGTON, March 4—The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced today proposed changes in highly erodible land and wetland conservation program provisions.

Keith Bjerke, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, said changes are required by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990.

"Additional programs have been added to the list of those under which benefits could be lost for violation of the rules," Bjerke said. "Certain benefits will also be denied under the dairy assessment refund program, the Agricultural Conservation Program, the Emergency Conservation Program, and the Water Bank Program."

"Conversion of a wetland after Nov. 28, 1990 for the production of an agricultural commodity will mean loss of eligibility for all USDA benefits to which producers would otherwise be entitled," said Bjerke.

"However," he added, "there is new authority for relief for 'good faith' wetland conservation and highly erodible land violations. For wetland violations the authority is retroactive to Dec. 23, 1985. For highly erodible land violations it takes effect at once for violations occurring after Nov. 28, 1990. Both permit a graduated payment reduction to be applied to earned benefits."

Following are other new provisions:

- Added authority for use of mitigation and restoration of wetlands;
- limited ineligibility of a tenant or renter where the landlord refuses to apply conservation measures necessary for compliance; and
- added requirements for certification of wetlands and for providing the public better access to information.

A proposed rule on the changes will be published in the Federal Register which will provide a 15-day period for public comment after

date of publication. All comments should be sent to: Sandra Nelson, Cotton, Grains and Rice Price Support Division, USDA/ASCS, Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013.

Bruce Merkle (202) 447-8206

#

USDA PROPOSES RULES FOR 1991-1995 COMMODITY ACREAGE REDUCTION PROGRAMS

WASHINGTON, March 4—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced proposed regulations for the 1991-1995 commodity acreage reduction programs.

Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation, said the regulations are required by provisions of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990.

“For the 1991 through 1995 crops of rice, upland cotton, feed grains and wheat, the acreage which is required to be designated as Acreage Conservation Reserve is calculated based upon the crop acreage base, rather than the acreage planted to the crop,” Bjerke said. “ACR for extra long staple cotton will continue to be computed based upon the acreage planted to the crop.”

Bjerke said that 50 percent of the required ACR, but not more than 5 percent of the crop acreage base, must be planted to an annual or perennial cover.

“However, this requirement does not apply in arid or traditionally summer-fallowed areas or for ELS cotton,” he said. “Cost-share assistance from CCC will be available to producers who plant a perennial cover on this acreage and is maintained for three years.”

Bjerke said producers are also given considerable planting flexibility. “Producers may plant for harvest on the established crop acreage base a commodity other than the specific program crop without losing any part of their base,” he said. “Permitted plantings include any program crop, oilseed, industrial or other crops, except any fruits and vegetables (including potatoes, dry edible beans, peas and lentils). The portion of the crop acreage base that may be planted to another crop may not exceed 25 percent of the base.”

“There is also a winter wheat option,” he said. “It is open to participating producers for the 1991 crop, with certain restrictions.”

Bjerke also announced that farms with histories of both irrigated and nonirrigated yields would earn deficiency payments based on their historic yields.

Other program provisions include the requirement that land designated to Conservation Use for payment acreage would have the same eligibility and cover requirements as ACR; a malting barley assessment which would be levied on producers of malting barley who are participating in the barley program and a definition of “oilseeds” which will include soybeans, sunflower seed, canola, rapeseed, safflower, flaxseed and mustard seed.

An Integrated Farm Management program option is also being offered. This provides incentives for producers to participate in a multiyear program where resource conserving crop rotations would be adopted. Producers would be able to plant resource conserving crops and still maintain their program crop acreage bases and receive payments as if the program crop had been planted. It will also assist producers in adopting integrated, multi-year, site-specific farm management plans.

The proposed rules were published in the Feb. 26 Federal Register. Comments may be sent to Director, Cotton, Grains and Rice Price Support Division, ASCS/USDA, Box 2415, Washington, D.C., 20013 and must be received by March 13.

Bruce Merkle (202) 447-8206

#

RIGHT QUEEN MAKES A HONEY OF A BEE

WASHINGTON—Queens, in the honeybee world, own new bragging rights in the age-old battle of the sexes.

Within bee colonies, it's the queen that can dictate a hive's success in producing honey, no matter which males father the honey-making offspring, reports Nicholas W. Calderone, a U.S. Department of Agriculture bee expert.

“As long as a beekeeper selects the right queen for mating, you don't worry about the males,” he said.

Traditionally, beekeepers who want to breed good honey-producing bees choose both males and females from top producing hives, Calderone

said. They artificially inseminate the queens or bring males and females together in isolated mating stations. He said either step can be costly and difficult.

Calderone's studies for USDA's Agricultural Research Service led to his development of a new, low-cost breeding technique. It relies on his finding that queens selected from hives with the greatest weight gain—from honey production—will dictate how well future hives will do.

Here is how the technique works: beekeepers weigh hives twice in the honeymaking season and rear daughter queens from the hives that gain the most weight. Then, the beekeeper lets the virgin daughter queens mate randomly with males.

The technique may not produce "hoards of additional honey," he says. But an increase by each colony of just ten pounds of honey—about \$5 worth—adds up when talking about 1,000 to 40,000 colonies, he notes.

"It could mean the difference between making a profit with less capital investment or going out of business," he says. He is based at the ARS Bee Research Laboratory, Beltsville, Md.

In his study, begun at Ohio State University and concluded at the ARS lab, he weighed hives at the start and end of the honey production season. He chose those that gained the most and least weight and, from them, reared queens that mated at random.

At the end of three years, colonies from the high-weight-gain strain added an average of three times more weight than colonies from the low-weightgain strain, he says.

Calderone also found that the time required to breed the hives can be cut in half compared to traditional breeding.

His study and Canadian studies showed hives that weigh the most early in the season tended to be the high gainers over the whole season. Selection based on short-term gain allows beekeepers, he says, to evaluate a new generation each year.

Otherwise, waiting to see how colonies perform until the fall means that the next generation cannot be produced until the following year and cannot be evaluated until the year after that.

An added benefit of the hive weighing is that beekeepers who produce their own queens in the summer will not have to buy replacement queens the next year, he said. Also, they will generally have more vigorous and

younger queens going into the winter—an important factor in successfully overwintering the colonies.

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USDA TO HOLD REFERENDUM ON NEW GEORGIA TOBACCO MARKET

WASHINGTON, March 6—The U.S. Department of Agriculture will hold a mail referendum March 11-15 to determine grower support for designating Ocilla, Ga., as a new tobacco auction market and merging it with the currently designated (i.e., USDA-monitored) flue-cured tobacco market of Fitzgerald, Ga.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the referendum follows earlier USDA approval of an application for the merger by local warehouse operators and businessmen.

The warehouse operators claim the existing modern facilities under sprinkler fire protection in Ocilla would be a good match for the older nearby Fitzgerald warehouse. USDA heard testimony on the application at a public hearing in Ocilla last November.

The designation will be effective if at least two-thirds of the growers voting in the referendum approve. To be eligible to vote, a grower must be an active producer residing in the counties of Ben Hill, Berrien, Coffee, Irwin, Tift, Turner, Telfair or Wilcox, Ga. USDA is distributing mail ballots to eligible voters.

The Tobacco Inspection Act requires USDA inspection of tobacco sold at designated markets. Price supports are also available for tobacco delivered to these markets for sale.

Growers eligible to vote who have not received ballots by March 11, should contact Ernest L. Price, Director, Tobacco Division, Rm. 502-Annex, P.O. Box 96456, AMS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456; tele. (202) 447-2567.

Notices about the referendum will be in the March 8 Federal Register.

Carolyn Coutts (202) 447-8998

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